

SOMERSET COUNTY



Selection of Focus Area

For 2001, Somerset County Health Department's priorities will include cancer, youth tobacco prevention and control, substance abuse, and entry into prenatal care for African-American females.

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Estimated Population, by Race – 1998

Total	24,300
White	52.6%
Other	47.4%

Estimated Population, by Age – 1998

Under 1	240	18-44	10,530
1-4	910	45-64	4,860
5-17	4,230	65+	3,530

All causes Mortality Rate (age-adjusted, per 100,000 population) 1996-1998 574.5

Infant Mortality Rate 1995-1999 10.5

Estimated Mean Household Income – 1999 \$35,700

Estimated Median Household Income – 1999 \$31,800

Civilian Unemployment Rate, Annual Average – 1999 7.5

Labor force (Top 4) – 1995

Government (Federal, Military)	2,800	Services	1,400
State & Local Government	2,600	Retail Trade	1,200

Sources: Maryland Vital Statistics, 1999
Maryland Department of Planning, 1995, 1998, 1999

Reducing Tobacco Use Among Youth

Definition

Tobacco use refers to the use of cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco products.

Problem

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. It is attributed to more than 400,000 deaths and is linked to heart disease, chronic lung disease and cancer. According to "Making Maryland the Tobacco Free State," a report by the Task Force to End Smoking in Maryland, more Marylanders die prematurely from tobacco use or exposure to secondhand smoke, than from any other single cause, including alcohol, motor vehicle accidents, AIDS, murders, suicides, illegal drug use, and fires combined. Despite this risk, many people start smoking each year. In 1996, over 1.8 million people nationwide became daily smokers. It was estimated that two thirds were under the age of 18. Teen-age tobacco use is a major public health problem. Prevention and control activities are imperative in changing negative health indicators that relate to tobacco use. Efforts must be initiated at the community level and supported at the state and federal levels.

Percent of Somerset County Students Reporting Cigarette Use by Grade Level and Time Period

Cigarette use in last 12 months

	1992	1994	1996	1998
12th Grade	40.0	29.4	37.0	42.7
10th Grade	28.6	29.4	36.9	40.2
8th Grade	19.5	30.5	29.0	21.6
6th Grade	7.5	1.4	16.6	18.4

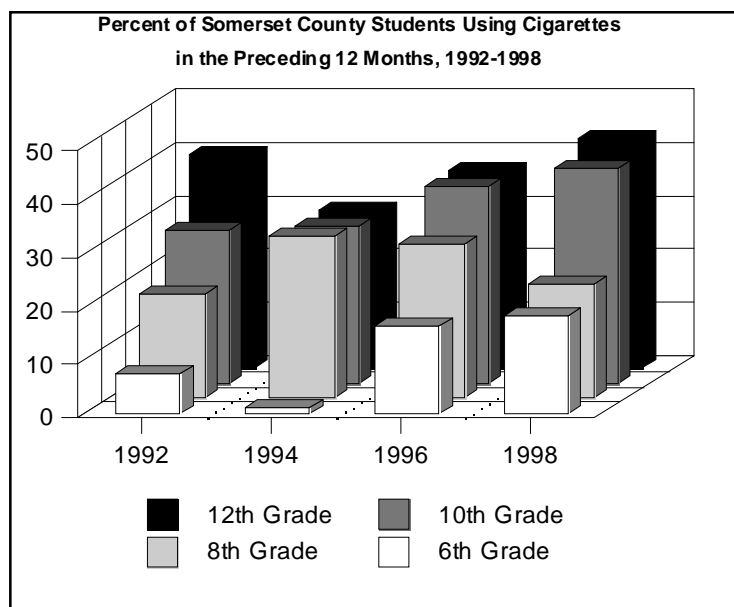
Source: Maryland Adolescent Survey, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998

Determinants

No single factor determines patterns of tobacco use. The patterns result from a complex interaction of multiple factors, such as: lack of education, low socio-economic status, low self-esteem, peer pressure, targeted marketing, availability of tobacco products, and cultural characteristics. Many of these factors place Somerset County at a higher risk of tobacco use. Statistically, 46% of the population have less than a high school education and 21.4% live below the poverty level. Tobacco may also be more accessible to Somerset County youth. A 1999 Food and Drug Administration vendor check discovered that 33% of establishments sold tobacco to consumers less than 18 years of age.

Disparities/Data

The National Youth Tobacco Survey, done in 1999, found that 12.8% of middle school students and 34.8% of high school students were using some form of tobacco. This equates to one of every 10 middle school students and more than one quarter of high school students. Somerset County is above the national average for tobacco use in the middle and high school population. According to the 1998 Maryland Adolescent Survey, 18.4 % of sixth graders, 21.6% of eighth graders, 40.2% of 10th graders and 42.7% of 12th graders had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months. Most adolescents start, not fully realizing that the nicotine in tobacco is as addictive as heroin, alcohol, or cocaine and most underestimate the health consequences. Smoking increases coughs, shortness of breath and respiratory illnesses, decreases physical fitness, and adversely affects blood cholesterol levels. Secondhand smoke can cause respiratory illness, increase the risk of lung cancer and heart disease and trigger asthma attacks.



Source: Maryland Adolescent Survey, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998

Objective 1 - By 2010, school-age tobacco use will be decreased by 50%. (Baseline 1998: 18.4% of sixth graders; 21.6% eighth graders; 40.2% 10th graders; and 42.7% of 12th graders had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months.)

Objective 2 - By 2010, Somerset County vendor compliance checks will result in a violation rate of no more than 5%. (Baseline: 33% in 1999)

Action Steps

- ⇒ Work with school administrators/personnel to develop policies on tobacco use.
- ⇒ Work with school officials to help create developmentally appropriate instruction in grades kindergarten through 12 that addresses the social and psychological causes of tobacco use.
- ⇒ Collaborate with school administrators to promote cessation programs.
- ⇒ Build community coalitions to address adolescent tobacco use.
- ⇒ Support community groups in their efforts to prevent smoking among adolescents.

- ⇒ Encourage adults who interact with adolescents (parents, teachers, etc.) to serve as role models.
- ⇒ Develop counter marketing strategies to the advertisement of tobacco products.
- ⇒ Provide outreach to adolescents to reduce initiation of tobacco use.
- ⇒ Provide training to health department staff who provide home visits in an effort to educate families on the effects of tobacco use.
- ⇒ Assist in and support law enforcement efforts to monitor community compliance with youth tobacco access laws.
- ⇒ Encourage elimination of counter displays of tobacco products by local merchants.

Partners

American Cancer Society • American Heart Association • American Lung Association • Local Management Board • Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice • School Health Council • Somerset County Board of Education • Somerset County Health Department

Related Reports

- American Heart Association. (1998). Children and the need for physical activity: fact sheet. *American Heart Association Website*. Available: http://www.americanheart.org/Health/Lifestyle/Physical_Activity/ChildFac.html
- Maryland State Department of Education. (1992, 1994, 1996, 1998). *Maryland adolescent survey*.
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Division of Cancer Control. (1996). *Maryland cancer control plan*.
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Division of Health Statistics. (1993-1998). *Maryland vital statistics annual reports*.
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Task Force to End Smoking in Maryland. (1999, December). *Making Maryland the tobacco-free state*.
- Smoke Free Maryland. (1999). "FDA compliance checks." *Smoke Free Maryland: A Coalition for Tobacco Control Website*. Available: <http://www.smokefreemd.org>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1998). *Healthy People 2010 objectives*. Report . Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Government Printing Office.

Cross-Reference Table for Somerset County

See Also

Child and Adolescent Health	33
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